



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

series of events, culminating to some worthy purpose, and sufficiently continuous to remain ever after part of the mind's furniture, to which the memory shall instinctively revert in its search of figures to exemplify the lessons it would illustrate? If Mr. Reade writes for fame, he will yet do something like this; but if writing is with him merely a profession, a means of living, he will of course continue to consult the market, and turn off his wares as rapidly as possible, before he and they become unfashionable.

- ART. V. — 1. *An Account of the Life, Opinions, and Writings of JOHN MILTON. With an Introduction to Paradise Lost.* By THOMAS KEIGHTLEY. London: Chapman and Hall. 1855. 8vo. pp. 484.
2. *MILTON. A Sheaf of Gleanings after his Biographers and Annotators.* By JOSEPH HUNTER. London: John Russell Smith. 1850. 12mo. pp. 72.
3. *The Poetical Works of JOHN MILTON, with a Life by* REV. JOHN MITFORD. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co. 1854. 3 vols.

IT is for no lack of prejudice and caprice in commentators, controversialists, and unfledged philologists, that the works of many of our older writers have not been frittered away as to their original strength and purity, and nothing left but a few fragments, which, rescued from the accumulating slime by curious hands, might afford some idea of the primitive formation. Yet, thanks to the enduring offspring of the press, we can in most cases, in English literature, turn from the deposit left by the retreating tide of each generation, to the original rock, which, thrown up on its own shore, no succeeding waves have reached. To those who with veneration care and love seek to protect this rock from sacrilegious hands, to point out the rich veins or the concealed gems, we cannot be too grateful; and when amongst the increasing drift they seek to preserve whatever of value may have been washed up by the sea of letters, and the results are clearly placed before us for

our instruction and profit, we can hardly over-estimate the cost at which we receive the benefit.

Those of the great dramatist alone excepted, Milton's writings have been the object of more conjecture, praise, and detraction, of more worthless and more elegant criticism, than those of any other English poet. He lived and moved in an age when in England no expressed thought passed unquestioned,—when there was a grand upheaving of old modes of faith and of action. He mingled fiercely, and as a literary champion, in the controversies of the times, and it is to this fact, aside from the beauty of his lighter verse or the bold flight of his epic Muse, that we must look, when we seek to account for the swarms of writers, who, with good or evil intent, have followed in the train of his original mind.

For his contemporary commentators, it was difficult to look impartially at any of the productions of Milton, no matter how free from political taint. He was one in whose vigorous pen they had exulted, or whose well-sustained assaults had filled them with rage. Even so late as when Johnson wrote his "Lives of the Poets," the old fire was still burning, and his Toryism was impregnated with the true bitterness of the Cavalier, with so little change, in a country like England, is political feeling transmitted with estates and customs. The views which prompted the great moralist to clutch at straws and poorly executed forgeries to slur Milton's fame, and which produced that life and critique which even Johnson's latest editor* acknowledges to be prejudiced and unfair,—although he mildly thinks the fault lies more in the manner than the matter,—we can but think, were very much the same that a century before produced Winstanley's sketch. That dizzard of a critic devotes three or four pages of his small octavo, "The Lives of the Poets," to the royalist John Cleveland, who might now almost rank with Mr. Lowell's *very* dead bards, while he kindly informs us that "John Milton was one whose natural parts might deservedly give him a place amongst the principal of our English Poets, having written two Heroick Poems and a Tragedy; namely, Paradise Lost,

* Cunningham.

Paradice Regain'd, and Sampson Agonistes. But his Fame is gone out like a Candle in a snuff, and his memory will always stink, which might have ever lived in honorable repute, had not he been a notorious Traytor, and most impiously and villanously bely'd that blessed Martyr King Charles the First."

But Johnson's attack was not unattended with good; for during the next twenty years the press teemed with editions of Milton, some of a most beautiful execution. New defenders and commentators sprang up, Hayley and Warton, Lofft, Dunster, Pearce, Symmons, and a host of others; some as violent on the one side as Johnson had been on the other. Greatest of all *in bulk* arose Todd, who with a shark's maw devoured all that came in his way, and, notwithstanding the many hard things said of him as an editor, his labors have been the staff upon which all later commentators have been more or less glad to lean. For the last fifty years, Todd for the poetical, and Symmons for the prose works, have been the Miltonic Encyclopædia, and as to the former, especially, it will probably be long ere any one will seek to displace his from its rank as the *variorum* edition. But this has been the age of reviewers and essayists, and articles on Milton in the English and American periodicals, many of them rich in merit, have been very numerous. Brydges, Mitford, Macaulay, Hallam, and other names of note, have appeared in the field, to say nothing of German, French, and American writers, and to the list we now have to add, with no little pleasure, that of Thomas Keightley, the work bearing whose name stands at the head of this article.

To pick the way amongst the *débris* of more than two hundred years, to know when to accept and when to reject, to weigh nicely so many clashing opinions and judgments, is no trifling task; but Mr. Keightley has performed the labor with equal skill and penetration. To set forth some of the authorities that have been consulted, and to furnish an idea of the estimation in which they are held, we give the following extract from one of the "Notes."

"Milton's own Latin poems supply a few incidents of his life; and in his Apology for Smectymnuus and his *Defensio Secunda* he has

furnished us with several interesting circumstances of his early life and his travels on the Continent. From his Latin letters, also, a few particulars may be gleaned.

“John Aubrey, the celebrated antiquary, who was personally acquainted with Milton, left in manuscript several circumstances relating to the biography of the poet. These furnished materials to Wood for his account of Milton in the *Athenæ Oxonienses*, and they have been published in the present century.

“Edward Phillips, the poet's youngest nephew, when publishing a translation of his uncle's Latin Epistles in 1694, prefixed to it an account of his life. This, though more brief than were to be desired, is extremely interesting, and is valuable as being the work of one so intimately connected with its subject. But we must recollect that it was probably written from memory only, more than twenty years after the death of the poet, and nearly half a century from the time that Phillips had been residing in his house. It may, therefore, not be free from error.

“In 1698, four years after Phillips, John Toland, the well-known deistic writer, prefixed a *Life* to the folio edition of Milton's prose works. It is written in a grave and manly tone, and furnishes some additional particulars.

“In 1725 Elijah Fenton prefixed an elegant sketch of Milton's *Life* to an edition of his poems; but it contained nothing that was not previously known.

“Jonathan Richardson, the painter, published in 1734, — in conjunction with his son, who possessed the learning in which he was himself deficient, — *Notes on Milton*, to which he prefixed a *Life*, containing a few particulars not to be found in those of Toland or Phillips, and which he had obtained from Pope, or from the poet's granddaughter.

“The learned and laborious Dr. Thomas Birch edited in 1738 a new edition of the prose works; and in the *Life* which he prefixed to it, his researches enabled him to add several interesting particulars. He was the first to direct attention to what is called the Cambridge Manuscript of *Comus* and some of the other poems.

“Newton's edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost* appeared first in 1749. The *Life* is tamely but impartially written, and contains hardly any additional matter.

“The *Life* of Milton has since been written by the vigorous but strongly prejudiced Johnson, the tame and super-elegant Hayley, the dry and ponderous Todd,* the impetuous and violent Symmons, the

* “We trust we shall be excused, when we say that, in our opinion, Todd's *Life* of Milton is the very *beau idéal* of bad biography.”

just, moderate, and elegant Mitford, and others; but of necessity they could add little to the previous stock. Thomas Warton had, however, in the second edition of the *Minor Poems*, in 1791, brought to light, from the archives of Doctors' Commons, Milton's Nuncupative Will, and the Depositions connected with it, which furnish some very interesting particulars respecting the domestic life of the poet in his latter years. Early in the present century Mr. Lemon discovered in the State Paper Office various documents relating to the Powell family, and also made extracts from the Orders of Council during the time of Milton's secretaryship, all of which appeared for the first time in 1809, in Todd's second edition of the *Poetical Works*. Finally, in 1823, the researches of Mr. Lemon brought to light the long-lost *De Doctrina Christiana*, and some documents connected with it, which will be found in the Bishop of Winchester's *Preliminary Observations*, and in the later editions of Todd's *Milton*. Additional particulars relating to Milton and his family have been discovered by Mr. Hunter, and published by him in his tract entitled '*Milton*.'

"For our account of Milton's family and friends we have been chiefly indebted to Warton in his edition of the *Minor Poems*, and to Godwin's *Lives of Edward and John Phillips*." — pp. 114–116.

The *Life* by Mitford above referred to is prefixed to the beautiful edition of Milton's *Complete Works* published by Pickering in eight octavo volumes, books which it is a luxury even to look into, and which every lover of Milton, or even of a beautiful book, should endeavor to possess. It is, besides, the only complete uniform edition of the *Prose and Poetical Works* that has been published. A briefer sketch by Mitford, copied from Pickering's so-called Aldine edition, is to be found in the excellent Boston edition of the poets now in the course of publication by Messrs. Little, Brown, & Co., whose liberality and enterprise deserve the thanks of the whole community.

We must admit that, after reading the Preface to Mr. Keightley's volume, we expected to lay it aside with but little more than a glance of curiosity; for with much that it was well to mention, he has mingled passages that it would have been far better to omit. It is to be expected of writers of "forty thousand copies sold in a week," that they should chant their own praises, and we believe it is common in this country for persons ambitious of fame to insert their memoirs, with a

photographic portrait attached, in works which find a fit resting-place on the tables of steamboat-saloons. But there is a want of dignity in a scholar's making an idol of himself for his own worship. He thus lays himself open to a suspicion of vanity, and to unkind censure and ridicule, while he should consent to have his merits, his learning, and his industry judged by their fruits alone. Mr. Keightley had previously given us a remarkable Preface, that prefixed to his *Fairy Mythology*, published in Bohn's series, which perhaps borrows its peculiarities from the nature of the work. There he truly says, that, like a prologue to a play, a preface to a book is often "an agreeable, but by no means necessary precursor." That some portions of this under consideration have not the "agreeable" quality, the following passages may indicate.

"I cannot, it is true, say that I regret having written the *Mythology of Greece and Italy*, for it has procured me consideration abroad, and, alien as the subject is from the usual turn of the English mind, it seems to have taken a place in our literature. But though I may have best elucidated the rural poetry of Virgil, and though I look back with pleasure to an excursion to Mantua to ascertain the scenery of the *Bucolics*, and to other circumstances connected with the Classics, yet I *do* most sincerely regret the time I devoted to them; for it was an act of the merest folly in one unconnected with Schools and Universities, more especially in me, whose views of what is of real importance in the languages and works of the ancients differ so much from those which generally prevail in our seats of learning. From these works I have derived no advantage whatever, and I have not even had the satisfaction of knowing in what estimation they are held, as those who read such books rarely give public expression to their opinions. Had I devoted that time and labor to modern literature, the result might have been widely different. The present volume may perhaps decide the question." — p. vii.

"The reader of Milton should be acquainted with the state of public affairs in his time. I will here follow a rather unusual course, and boldly recommend my own *History of England*. I do so both on account of its conciseness, and because I believe it to be the only one that can lay any just claim to impartiality." — p. ix.

"As in writing this volume I have been actuated solely by a regard for truth, and reverence for the fame of Milton, — years and their at-

tendant evils having nearly quenched my love of fame, — and as I live in seclusion, with little society beyond that of my own family, I may perhaps say, without presumption, that I am almost indifferent to criticism; praise cannot elate, or censure depress me. To the public expression of either, especially the latter, my ear is little used, and I have long been accustomed to be content with the silent approbation of my own mind. Conscious, then, of having exerted myself to the utmost of my powers to do justice to my subject, justice is all I ask of any, while to the friendly critic I would say, —

‘Approve it only, — ’t is too late to praise.’”

— pp. x., xi.

We trust, nevertheless, it is not too late to praise, for we cannot do otherwise, and this is not the first time that the author has finally closed his literary career. But Mr. Keightley may think he can afford to permit his readers to find fault or make sport with his prefaces, without detriment to the instruction and pleasure which they prelude; and if in them he manifests a morbid feeling when speaking of himself, it must be allowed as a venial offence when we know that he is a victim to illness and pecuniary misfortune. We are pleased to find that this unhealthy tone does not extend into the volume, in which the subject is handled in a clear, independent, and vigorous style, and the materials are arranged in a manner that commands our admiration.

The first Part — nearly one third — of the book is devoted to everything that is known relating to Milton's life, his family and friends; the second Part discusses his opinions; the third gives an account of his works in prose and poetry, with the exception of the “*Paradise Lost*,” and the volume closes with an Introduction to that poem.

A new Life of Milton, which should be full and complete, including all that research has brought to light, has been much needed, — a Life which should be continuous, so as not to perplex the reader with notes and digressions that leave him in doubt where to resume the thread of the narrative. This we now have, written, with a few exceptions, in a pleasing style, and it may be read with a “new sensation” by even those who have become weary of the innumerable biographies of the poet. We are not at this late day to look for anything new in the facts of Milton's life, although Mr. Keightley en-

deavors to elucidate some few points which have escaped the notice of former biographers, as in his attempt to assign the time of the year when Milton visited the different cities of Italy. The following account of the closing days of Milton is a well-conceived picture.

“Thus calmly, thus gently, quietly, and unostentatiously, glided away the closing days in the life of a man who possessed a secret consciousness that he had well performed the part assigned him on earth; had well employed the talents committed to him; had achieved a name among the most illustrious of the sons of men, which was to last perhaps coevally with the world itself. All these cheering thoughts and anticipations were illumed and gilded by the light that beamed on his inward sense from the future world, in which he was to enjoy the fulness of bliss. Surely such a man could not have been unhappy, however narrow his circumstances, however undutiful his children, however disappointed his religious and political aspirations. Nor should be omitted, in enumerating the blessings bestowed on this illustrious man, his total exemption at all periods of his life from the miseries of a dependence on and solicitation of courts and ministers and the worldly great, — miseries described by his great poetic sire, from bitter experience, so truly, so vividly, and so feelingly:—

‘Full little knowest thou, that hast not tried,
What hell it is in suing long to bide.’”

— pp. 72, 73.

In the following passage relating to the *Paradise Lost*, an opinion is expressed which may in one sense be true, but which in its entire meaning we must doubt. The Italics are our own.

“The first edition of fifteen hundred copies sold fast enough to entitle the author to his second £ 5 at the end of two years; and when we consider the state of the times, the ill odor which the name of the author must have been in with the greater part of the aristocracy, the clergy, and the classes in general who were the chief purchasers of books, and other circumstances, we cannot regard the sale as a bad one. We should recollect the slow sale of the poems of Wordsworth and Southey in our own days. As to the assertion of the poem being above the age in which it appeared, we cannot regard it as correct; the knowledge of the Scriptures, the classics, and the Italian poets, *was probably greater at that time than it is at the present day*; and this is the knowledge requisite for understanding the *Paradise Lost*.” — p. 67.

We hardly know what is here meant by the term "greater"; but if Mr. Keightley intends to say, as we presume he does, that learning was more confined to the study of the Scriptures, the Italian poets, and the classics, and consequently that the general knowledge of them by every educated man was greater than it is to-day, — in short, that the scholar knew more of what there was to be known than can be expected of the scholar of our own time, — we may agree with him. But to say that in any other sense the knowledge of that day was greater than it is with us, is erroneous; for he himself tells us in his Preface, that it is neither a merit nor a boast that his scientific knowledge should be more extensive and correct than Milton's, coming into the world as he did nearly two centuries later. Although it is true that great attention was given to the Latin authors and to Latin composition in Milton's age, and though there were many men of vast erudition, yet Hallam writes: "Greek, however, seems not much to have flourished even immediately after the Restoration. Barrow, who was chosen Greek Professor in 1660 [the *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667], complains that no one attended his lectures. 'I sit like an Attic owl,' he says, 'driven out from the society of all other birds.'"^{*} For more than a century, Italy had been the leader and teacher in the advancement of knowledge, yet the interpreters, so to speak, had been few; and even if fifty years ago, as we have been told, there were more persons in England acquainted with the Indian tongues than with the Italian, yet the increasing taste for the modern languages makes us receive Mr. Keightley's assertion with hesitation, even in regard to the Italian poets. In England, and certainly in New England, the knowledge of the Scriptures necessary for the understanding of the *Paradise Lost* as a grand and beautiful poem is by no means wanting, and as to systematic theology, the knowledge is without doubt greater than when it was written, albeit the pedantic theologians of that day knew

"What Adam thought of, when his bride
Came from her closet in his side."

In every branch of learning, as in the mechanic arts, there is a

^{*} *Literary History of Europe*, Vol. III. p. 249. See also same volume, p. 606.

necessity for the division of labor, and the accuracy of knowledge thus acquired has been especially shown in every new exegesis both of the Scriptures and of the classics. Aided by the working of this principle, even the casual readers of to-day, we think, would not suffer in a comparison with their ancestors as to "the knowledge requisite," although their knowledge would exhibit itself in a different form.

In the closing narrative of the *Life* proper, there are some reflections which we think must strike all favorably, and we fancy that the copious and slovenly edited diary of Moore was not out of the mind of the writer when he alludes to some of the biographies of modern times.

"In what precedes, we have endeavored to arrange and narrate all the circumstances relating to the life, manners, pursuits, and occupations of the ever-illustrious John Milton. Scanty as they may appear to be, they are, in reality, more copious than those which have reached us of any other distinguished man anterior to the eighteenth century. Thus, what do we *know* of the lives of Dante, of Shakespeare, of Spenser? Almost nothing. Of Torquato Tasso and a few others we know somewhat more, yet still comparatively little. And perhaps — though we are far from asserting it of Milton — it is better for the fame of great writers, that their history should be involved in a kind of mythic envelope, and that thus, like superior beings, they should be known to the after-world only by the products of their creative genius. We say this, knowing no human being to be exempt from imperfection, and judging by the effects of some of the copious biographies of modern times." — pp. 77, 78.

Part Second is devoted to the consideration of Milton's opinions on Religion, Inspiration, Philosophy, Toleration, Government, and Education, concluding with some observations upon his Learning. In the chapter on Religion, we have a short review of what was known of Milton's theology from his writings, previously to the discovery of the *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*. This treatise is then fully analyzed, and the author gives us, "to supply the deficiency of Milton's work," a brief essay upon what should be the true foundation for the evidences of Christianity, — a treatise not wholly unacceptable as presenting the writer's own views, but utterly worthless for its alleged purpose. No writer can approach

theological ground without finding an adversary for every word he utters, and we are confident that this portion of Mr. Keightley's work, at least, will not go unchallenged. We refer particularly to this portion of the work at the present time, as the recent publication of Brewster's enlarged "Life of Newton" has given more information upon his religious views than was previously open to the public. Milton and Newton have been placed in the front rank by the advocates of a certain form of Christian belief, as foremost among their greatest minds; and the new "Life of Newton" will doubtless suggest to many the renewal of their acquaintance with the opinions of him whose *Paradise Lost* has "tinged the faith of the English world." But let all such persons bear in mind the words of Dr. Channing, in his admirable Essay on Milton: "We owe it to truth to say, that we put little trust in these fashionable proofs. The chief use of great names in religious controversy is to neutralize one another, that the unawed and unfettered mind may think and judge with a due self-reverence, and with a solemn sense of accountableness to God alone."

For his age, Milton was certainly not intolerant; his Muse was bound by no conventional chain, and in religion, although he opposed the Established Church as a dangerous political engine, he considered no Protestant as a heretic, saying, "It is a human frailty to err, and no man is infallible here on earth." Popery he would have suppressed, as a system of idolatry, aside from its usurpations in matters of church and state. Mr. Keightley seems inclined to think that Milton's conclusions were not far from right, reasoning himself from different premises; but adds a view which, if it were more generally disseminated in this country, might put an end to much of that feeling now so rife, and which to-day savors too strongly of intolerance and bigotry. Speaking of the Church of Rome, he says:—

"But her impotence is our security; the spirit of the age is against her, and she struggles, and ever will struggle, in vain, to recover her former power. The educated classes are everywhere opposed to her pretensions, and therefore she may with safety be tolerated. She will also always have votaries and make proselytes, for weak, trifling minds

will be caught with her gaudy, theatric ceremonies; the feeble worshippers of antiquity and authority will submit to her pretensions." — p. 224.

Our author's illustrations of Milton's writings are marked by good sense and discrimination; his reasons for differing from other commentators are fully stated, and many of his strictures upon their peculiar views are clever, and, as we think, entirely just. As to the prose works we have an abstract of the most striking parts, with frequent quotations. To the student of history, Milton's political tracts possess a sterling value, furnish ample material for thought and curious information, and, full as they are of the fire of no vulgar enthusiasm, illustrate a stormy page in England's struggle for self-government; while the *Areopagitica*, that "noble treatise," should be read by every man who glories in or is striving for the freedom of opinion and expression. The spirit with which Mr. Keightley approaches the difficult subject of Milton's poetical works, — difficult from the fosse of criticism that surrounds them, — may be best understood from his own words.

"In treating of Milton's poetry, we will not venture, in imitation of Johnson and others, to erect ourselves into critics, and sit in judgment on it, pronouncing authoritatively on the merits and demerits of the pieces that come under consideration. For this purpose, a mind nearly equal to the poet's own would be required; and few, we apprehend, can lay claim with justice to a possession of such eminence. For our own part, we frankly declare that, conscious of our immense inferiority to the poet in mental power, we would not presume to sit in judgment on what bears the stamp of his own approval; for it should always be remembered that these poems were not — as is but too much the case now-a-days — given to the world immediately after they had been composed, but were, for the most part, retained in the poet's desk for many years, and were not published till the time when his judgment was in its full maturity and vigor. In our eyes they are, we may say, all beauty and perfection, bating that compliance with the false taste of the age to be discerned in some of the earlier pieces, but from which he speedily emancipated himself. The other apparent faults all vanish when we obey that primary but too often neglected law of criticism, of placing ourselves, as far as possible, in the position of the poet, and bring to our mind the opinions that prevailed, and the meaning that words bore, in his time. All then that we propose to do is to offer such illus-

trations of the various pieces as will enable the reader to enter into their meaning, and enjoy their manifold beauties." — pp. 249, 250.

This is the true catholic spirit in which our old writers should be approached, far removed from that too prevalent feeling which, exalting the critic into the observer's chair, and reversing the telescope, — to use a familiar figure, — exhibits all nature and art in miniature, or which, even when the glory of a planet is revealed by the usual modes of observation, dwells upon the magnified spots alone, forgetting the luminous whole of which they are but a fraction, and whose brightness they render more vivid by contrast.

During the winter of the last year, the inhabitants of several of the Atlantic cities and towns were invited to be present at an autopsy of Milton; and although the knife was applied according to certain dicta of the schools varied by some very original cuts of the practitioner, the pupils could not but doubt the skill and ability of the operator for the labor he had undertaken. The difficulty seemed to be, that the subject was too large for him to obtain a comprehensive view of it from his stand-point, and the *dissecta membra* of the Paradise Lost were treated as though, strangers to one another, they had been brought into the theatre from a dozen different hospitals.* The anatomy of common minds differs from that of intellectual giants to so great a degree, that, in approaching the latter, a rigid adherence to fixed critical laws must be waived; somewhat of inspiration must be borrowed from the genius opened to our view; and if even then we fall far short of complete success in our demonstration, we shall at least avoid the abyss of absurdity, on the borders of which so many tyros hover.

Our author, in this part of his work, indulges in several digressions suggested by the topics under consideration. He differs from those conservatives who think that a severe adherence to the earliest printed text, where the manuscript is not procurable, is the surest mode of approaching purity, and that for one true point or rendering of modern correctors we

* Milton's Paradise Lost not a Work of Art. A Series of Lectures, by Charles H. Goddard, of Cincinnati. Delivered in Boston, February, 1855. Reported in the Boston Courier.

have two blunders. But it is with no spoiler's hand that this delicate question is touched.

"We cannot refrain from making a digression here on the state of our typography in former times. We have seen that Milton was utterly careless about punctuation, and that even a most important word could be omitted in one of his poems, without himself or his friend who read the proof-sheets becoming aware of it; and yet we are called upon to receive as almost immaculate the first folio of Shakespeare's plays, printed after the death of the author, and edited by men who probably had never before in their lives corrected proof-sheets! In fact, it is almost wonderful, all things considered, that we should have these divine dramas in so perfect a state as they are, and infinite is our obligation to Hemming and Condell; but still we must acknowledge that, as compared with the works of Spenser, Ben Jonson, and some others, they contain numerous errors, caused most probably by the ill-written manuscript that was placed in the printers' hands,* and the absence of the author's own supervision.

"A compositor in a printing-office is to be regarded as a copyist. Speaking then from our own experience, in copying passages for this work, we would say that the errors he would be likely to commit, and which nothing but the eye of the author might be able to detect, — and that not always, — are omission, addition, transposition, substitution." — pp. 297, 298.

In speaking of the complaints made of a want of harmony in Milton's verse and in that of other poets, the author rightly considers them to have their origin not in the verse, but in the reader, and adds a note which we give below, as we have seen the authority referred to quoted as an excuse by those who have been wanting in the requisite skill. There is nothing more grateful to an ignoramus than to find some screen for his insensibility or stupidity in the example of noted men. Carefully separating in them the wheat from the chaff, he detects in the latter a striking resemblance to his own peculiarities, fancying in the fulness of his conceit the blemish to be but the index of hidden worth.

"Moore (Diary, April 14, 1819) tells us that himself and Lord Lansdowne found Chaucer 'unreadable.' The reason was, they did not know how to read him." — p. 327.

* "Compositors have to work against time: it is therefore little less than positive dishonesty to send illegible manuscript to the printers."

The following is pertinent to the same subject:—

“The verse of *Paradise Lost* — we might indeed say, our blank verse in general — does not seem to be as yet generally understood. It is really painful to read Johnson’s essay on the subject, and to see him signalizing some of the most melodious lines of the poem as wanting in the very quality which most distinguishes them. But Johnson had no ear whatever for the variety of poetic melody, he could only discern and enjoy mechanic forms; the heroic verse, in which the accent falls regularly on every alternate syllable, he regarded as perfect, what varied from that standard as faulty, imperfect, and inharmonious. In fact, he reminds one of the decision of the ass, in the Italian poet’s ingenious apologue, when chosen to decide whether the palm for musical skill should be given to the nightingale or the cuckoo. ‘It may be, Madam Nightingale,’ said the donkey to the former, ‘that your song has more trills and turns in it than that of the cuckoo, but the cuckoo’s has more method.’” — p. 440.

The Introduction to the *Paradise Lost*, from which this last quotation is taken, exhibits the research, acumen, and learning of the writer. There is a digression upon the subject of Dante’s *Inferno*, in which Mr. Keightley takes strong ground in support of his theory regarding the concealed object of that poem, suggested by his dissent from Hallam and Macaulay as to the parallelism they attempt to trace between Dante and Milton. We shall close our extracts by one of our author’s quotations, with his introductory remarks.

“One quotation, however, we will make, because it is one which must be inaccessible to most readers, and because it is the opinion of a man who was a true poet himself, — we mean Esaias Tegnér, bishop of Vexiö, in Sweden, and author of the *Frithiofs Saga*, perhaps the most beautiful poem of the nineteenth century. In his panegyric on Count Oxenstjerna, when he comes to speak of that nobleman’s translation of *Paradise Lost*, he thus expresses himself respecting the original author:—

“‘Milton, with his sublime genius, is, in a certain point of view, the most irregular of all poets. For he not only departs from rules, but he casts them down with the strength of a giant, and builds up a new poetic world on their ruins. For this reason, his wonderful poem cannot be assigned a place in any of the departments which are usually regarded as the only possible ones for poetic creations. He takes at once into his great poetic ocean the whole of the four paradisaal rivers

of poetry, the epic, the lyric, the didactic, and the dramatic. It has therefore been justly observed, that the proper object of the poem is didactic, as the poet will, by means of it, justify the ways of God to men. It is epic merely by the greatness of the action and the episodes respecting the war in heaven. But the action itself is dramatic, both in design and execution, and the main interest from beginning to end dwells about a single great tragic character, the fallen archangel. Finally, the poem is lyric, not only in single passages, but even in general, in its whole tone and expression. Thus then the *Paradise Lost*, in a poetic point of view, forms a species in itself, without a model, and as yet without a copy; but to think of rejecting it on this account would be to sacrifice the just rights of genius to the crotchets of the schools. The power with which this wonderful poem seizes on every mind of a deeper and more serious cast, only proves the poverty of our ordinary poetic theories.' — p. 409.

Here, then, we have a book which is the most thorough and concise introduction to Milton's writings that has been produced, a work complete in itself, and, although especially designed as a companion to an edition of the *Paradise Lost* now in the press, well adapted to serve as a hand-book to any edition of the poet. We heartily thank Mr. Keightley for his labors, which we hope may lead others to find, as he professes to have found, in the study of Milton, "a source of delight in prosperity, of strength and consolation in adversity."

It is a pleasure to know that our own countrymen have not been backward in the homage they have paid to the genius of Milton. Dr. Channing's Essay will always stand in the front rank. Several years ago, Philadelphia furnished in Mr. John Hall an admirable translator of the "*Epistolæ Familiares*"; in the first American edition of the prose works, published in the same city, there is an enthusiastic tribute to Milton's powers by Rufus W. Griswold; and the posthumous Essays of the lamented Henry Reed contain many pleasing pages upon our poet. Keightley, in his notes, has occasion to refer to Ticknor's *History of Spanish Literature*, which reminds us that, if we have not been misinformed, there are in the portfolio of that learned gentleman many manuscript sheets upon the subject of Milton, with the literature bearing upon whose writings and those of his commentators his library is very choicely furnished. Nor can we forget the graceful

lectures delivered before the Lowell Institute in Boston by Mr. George Stillman Hillard and Professor Lowell. Could we possess these various manuscripts in a permanent form, they would be widely read and prized, adding, if possible, to the debt of gratitude we already owe their authors.

Mr. Hunter, whose little tract, entitled, "Milton, a Sheaf of Gleanings after his Biographers and Annotators," we have given in our caption, we might almost claim as being an American from his work on the Founders of New Plymouth, full of valuable historical information. The genealogical investigation to which the tract is chiefly devoted has elicited some new facts for which Keightley has acknowledged his indebtedness, and the notes on some of the poems, aside from their merit, are curious, as showing how every line, nay, almost every word, of Milton's verse, has furnished scope for commentators.

In closing our review, we must not omit referring to a contemporary sketch, entitled "Milton the Londoner," to be found in those delightful volumes of Charles Knight, "Once upon a Time," and would add, that one and all of these charming stories of the old *régime* will well repay perusal.

ART. VI.—*India, Ancient and Modern, Geographical, Historical, Political, Social, and Religious ; with a Particular Account of the State and Prospects of Christianity.* By DAVID O. ALLEN, D. D., Missionary of the American Board for twenty-five years in India, Member of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and Corresponding Member of the American Oriental Society. Boston : Jewett & Co. 1856. Large 8vo. pp. 618.

THE conquest of India by England, and her present empire in the southern part of Asia, are the most remarkable political changes in the Eastern Continent within the past century. One hundred years ago the English possessions in India consisted of the island of Bombay, and the cities of Calcutta and